

**But a Few Acres of Snow? –  
Weather Images in Canadian Short Prose  
(1945-2000)**

**Hypotheses of Judit Nagy's  
PhD dissertation**

**2008.**

## 1. The topic of the dissertation

As John Lynch puts it, “weather is in us and all around us, a huge interconnected force of chaos, creation and destruction. It is also the thin veil that shrouds our planet and defines the limits within which we can stay alive: the temperatures below and above which our bodies will cease to function, the forces of wind and flood that we can withstand, or the electrical charge that can instantly destroy us” (11). Yet, perhaps because its presence verges on a commonplace, we tend not to think of it – it remains a natural, taken-for-granted corollary of life on Earth. At the same time, “human culture is influenced by the natural environment” (Ermenc 46) therefore weather is bound to surface in tropes relating to the human condition. It may seem a negligible, marginal subject for the European mindset as the Old World seems to have lost its primal intimacy with Nature, which Canada is still in possession of. Weather appears to be a determining factor in Canada much more than in Europe for it influences and interferes with inhabitants’ life in a most basic manner: “With our cold winters, hot summers and everything in-between it is not surprising that the weather is a national preoccupation of Canadians” (“Weather”). Or, as a web entry on Canadianisms explains, “virtually any conversation will inevitably include a brief discussion of the weather - it is such a dominant force in Canadians' lives” (“Canadianisms”).

Canadian literature seems to reflect this higher degree of weather dependence. And, in Atwood’s words, “literature is not only a mirror, it is also a map, a geography of the mind. Our literature is one such map if we can learn to read it [...] as the product of who and where we have been” (*Survival* xx), or, as Kroetsch holds, “in a sense, we haven’t got an identity until somebody tells our story. The fiction makes us real” (qtd in Wiebe and Van Herk viii). This puts literary weather in the position of directly connecting to Canadian identity, regardless of its regional or temporal variation. Responding to the rhetorical question in what sense Canadian literature is distinctive, Pacey suggests in *Selections from Major Canadian Writers* that it “can be more satisfactorily answered by readers outside Canada than by those within” (xvii). My personal opinion is that weather-consciousness does belong to the traits which make Canadian literature in English distinct, which is also supported by Pacey’s highlighting “attitude to the physical environment” (xvii) as a defining factor.

Certainly, the theme of attitude to the physical environment has always been close to the Canadian heart, and weather qualifies as an environmental issue, given a new momentum in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by climate change. Admittedly, the dissertation is of environmentalist concern. Environmental criticism is “a rapidly emerging field of literary study that considers the relationship that human beings have to the environment” with the purpose of “explor[ing] how

nature and the natural world are imagined through literary texts” (“What Is Environmental Criticism?”).

## **2. Structure of the dissertation**

Structurally speaking, the following train of thought is adhered to. The first chapter serves as a general introduction to the topic of the dissertation focusing on the ubiquity of weather in contemporary Canadian culture, the popularity of the short story in second-half-of-the-20<sup>th</sup>-century Canada and the tradition of weather image depiction in the Canadian literary idiom. The second chapter (“Short Story Text and Weather Image”) defines the terms within the framework of which the dissertation operates. This includes our approach to the short story texts, those characteristic features of the short story and its Canadian variety that may be of some relevance to weather depiction, and the interpretation of the notion of image as the dissertation aims at discussing weather images. Next, in accordance with the theoretical framework, the hypotheses will be formed. The subsequent chapter (“*The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories Project*”) presents some background information on the research carried out just as it will display and evaluate research results taking into consideration both quantitative and qualitative markers such as regional and temporal image frequency, image role and polarity, Margaret Atwood’s victimisation theory or the degree of abstraction. The fourth chapter (“Supplementing the Project”) contains the extension of the research through the re-examination of relevant ambiguous, deficient or surprising quantitative results at a larger sample, in the light of literary globalization, multiculturalism and the regional code (4.1 and 4.2) and by means of the addition of a related qualitative point (4.3). Finally, the dissertation is concluded by the appraisal and modification of the original hypotheses.

## **3. Methods of research**

It is the second edition of *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* that forms the subject of the basic survey presented in detail in the third chapter of the dissertation. The choice fell on this short story collection for the following reasons. Firstly, the volume contains stories written after WWII, which is the most relevant period for research in the history of the Canadian short story as it was pointed out in the introduction. Secondly, the listed stories represent a variety of Canadian short story writing. Third, the two editors are recognised and respected critics of the Canadian literary scene, which ensures a more reliable selection than an own database, where the arbitrariness of choice would be non-defendable. Moreover, the stories in Atwood and Weaver’s collection are both spatially and temporally representative of the second-half-of-twentieth-century short story distribution of Canada, which makes the volume

preferable for our purposes to other similar anthologies. In addition, other short story anthologies by well-established publishing houses either contained too few stories, mixed novel excerpts or poems with short stories, had a specific regional or temporal focus, or contained only women writers. Naturally, a regionally and temporally valid literary map is most likely to result in an uneven regional and temporal distribution, which is to be overridden by the application of relative frequency control in our quantitative calculations. How this method translates into practice is that the frequency data will be compared to those of relative frequency, and conclusions will be drawn taking both sets of data into consideration.

Weather-related images are grouped into four categories for the analysis: primary and secondary weather images, images of seasons, and the abstract noun *weather* itself. **Primary weather images** are those of frequent weather phenomena such as clouds, fog, ice (including frost and icicle), rain, snow, storm (including thunder and lightning), sun, temperature and wind. They will be subjected to a full-scale analysis consisting of all the proposed points. **Secondary weather images** incorporate images of relatively rare weather phenomena, and effects or indices of other, more frequent ones, as well as phenomena in close relation to the weather, which include aurora borealis, drought and dust as an indication of lack of precipitation, moisture ranging from uncomfortably dry to humid, the moon as a portent or as a sign of clear sky at night, rainbow, shade as an implication of intense heat, and sky as an indicator, a stage for weather to perform on. The examination of secondary images will be less extensive for their secondary importance, yet, it cannot be ignored, as studying the margins always has benefits. Linked to weather through the notion of climate are the **seasons** (spring, summer, autumn and winter), which will form the third large group of weather-related images in the survey. Finally, the employment of the abstract notion **weather** may also deserve some attention. The weather image categories listed above will be considered one by one, in the same order as suggested here.

The analysis is divided into a **quantitative** and a **qualitative** part in the case of each weather image. Within the scope of quantitative analysis, **regional** and **temporal distribution** are examined. These points of examination are made relevant by literary regionalism as a significant factor of the Canadian literary scene in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and by the changing approach to literary subject matter along the temporal axis. The comparison with the actual climate is carried out based on climatic data recorded in the southern, more densely populated part of each geographical region. As rural and urban fiction differ markedly in some traits, and can be conceived as having regions of their own, attention is also paid to this factor, within the framework of the examination of regional distribution. Qualitative factors include **degrees of abstraction**, **image role**, **image polarity** and **weather images in power relation**. Two scales

have been set up for measuring degrees of abstraction. One moves along the axis of **overtness**, the other examines **directness**. I have termed a reference **overt** if it the vehicle refers to an actual quality of the tenor. In the sentence “I always thought that *snow* was *white*” (AW 35) the word *white* describes a quality that would also normally belong to snow. However, this relationship does not hold in the case of a **covert** reference. Consider “*Her voice* has gone *white*” (AW 117), for example. Here *white* is a reference to the whiteness of the snow surrounding the female protagonist of Timothy Findley’s “The Duel in Cluny Park” whereas it is human voice this whiteness is attributed to. Again, if you take the phrase “the almost instantly blinding *glare* of the snow” (AW 36), the word *glare*, apart from the meaning *strong, unpleasant, dazzling light* can be associated with a person’s angry way of looking, so weather allows for the admission of human qualities here. It follows from the previously said that images with the potential of projecting human characteristics onto weather or weather characteristics onto human belong to the covert category.

An image is regarded as **direct** in my interpretation if it is mentioned in a given text. “The fields were dead with *snow*” (AW 98) contains a direct weather image because the word *snow* is mentioned in it. An indirect image shows only the consequences of a given weather phenomenon, the phenomenon itself is not mentioned. In Clark Blaise’s story “A Class of New Canadians” we view *slithering taxis* and *slushy curbs* roaming the streets of Montreal (AW 282). Even though the snow itself is not mentioned in either case, the words *slithering* and *slushy* imply that there is snow on the road on which taxis are sliding, and this snow is partly melted to form slush. Note that an image can be covert yet direct, that is, the two categories are not congruent. The image “fields dead with snow” (AW 98) is covert as it involves personification, yet, the word *snow* is present in it therefore it is direct.

From the point of view of image roles, we can differentiate between **central** and **marginal roles**. An image has a central role in a story if it plays an organic part in forming the short story plot or bears undeniable consequences with regard to the protagonist’s life. It is worth mentioning that, in the same story, one weather image may fulfil a central role while another is assigned a marginal one. In this case, the story will be considered central for overall image role because there is at least one weather image playing a central role in it. Centralization can serve as an additional index for the measurement of regional and temporal interest in the given weather images.

An image is of **positive polarity**, if it is associated with events or phenomena which contribute to the development of a positive micro-atmosphere (the atmosphere of the narrative-descriptive

locality of the image) within the story. Towards the end of W. P. Kinsella's "Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa" the image of rain surfaces as the embodiment of the male protagonist's tender and caring love towards the land he owns: "It rained an Iowa spring rain as soft as spray from a warm hose. [...] It was near noon on a gentle Sunday when I walked out to that garden" (AW 207). In the same paragraph, affectionate emotions towards the land are confirmed by the male protagonist: "All around me the clean smell of earth and water [...] I loved Iowa as much as a man could love a piece of earth" (AW 207).

Similarly, an image is of **negative polarity** if it is associated with events or phenomena which contribute to the development of a negative micro-atmosphere within the story. To provide an example, the sun is described as "rac[ing] like a wizened orange [...] through the tattered clouds" (AW 26) in Sinclair Ross's "The Lamp at Noon." The word *wizened*, meaning *looking smaller and having many folds because of old age*, expresses, in the given context, how powerless and impotent the sun proves to be in its symbolic function to sustain life in this lonely and isolated corner of the earth. The powerlessness of the sun is paralleled to the helplessness of the female protagonist, whose "eyes were fixed and wide with a curious immobility" three lines later in the text.

It may happen that a weather image is found in a textual environment where neither of the above two relations holds true. In such cases the given image is of **neutral polarity**. In Joyce Marshall's "The Old Woman," the sentence "Sunset came and she prepared dinner" emerges when the female protagonist is about to go out to help a woman give birth. The image of *sunset* is of neutral polarity here as it does not contribute to the development of either a negative or a positive micro-atmosphere in the given short story, it simply is a time marker. Similarly, in a passage of Alistair MacLeod's "As Birds Bring Forth the Sun," seasons are employed merely to denote the passing of time: "and then they were into summer and fall and winter and another spring" (AW 223) therefore they are of neutral polarity.

Finally, as an aspect of image effect, it is an interesting question to examine how applicable Atwood's **victim theory** is for the images of weather.

Chapter 4 dwells upon the subject of **quantitative and qualitative extension** made relevant by the analysis presented in chapter 3. Quantitative extension includes the discussion of local versus universal and the regional code, whereas the qualitative extension to the project focuses on metaphor. Obviously, quantitative extension entails the problem of setting up a new database. The findings of *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* project imply that it

is reasonable to create three distinct groups of stories for observation: that of ethnic writers of the eighties and nineties, that of mainstream writers of the same period, and, finally, that of mainstream writers between 1945 and 1979. Twenty stories represent each of the aforementioned groups, totalling a sample of sixty. As for the criteria for selection, three principles have been applied. First, single author books have been neglected on the grounds that selecting a story from such a volume would leave much room for manipulation (i.e. the story best approximating our expectations for the given period could be selected). Next, literary magazines as a primary source have been discarded for their unlimited variety and oversupply of stories composed by a great number of relatively unknown writers, which would make our choice more arbitrary than what is inevitable. Last, within the content of a wide range of anthologies, those short stories have been given priority whose authors were not included in the previously analysed collection. However careful the selection process though, it has to be emphasized that a certain degree of subjectivity will remain non-defendable in the case of any such database.

#### **4. Hypotheses of the dissertation**

Based on the observations made in the introductory chapter and in points 2.1-2.3 of the dissertation, the following hypotheses can be formulated:

##### **4.1 Frequency of weather images**

As weather seems to both pervade quotidian life and be present in inherited literary patterns in Canada, weather images will, in all probability, make a frequent appearance in the Canadian short story of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in spite of what literary criticism seems to hint for the period in question. Regarding the frequency of the different elements within the category of weather, those connected to winter are likely to dominate on the grounds that Canadian winters are proven to be strongly affecting the Canadian collective consciousness and imagination.

##### **4.2 More than just ornamentation**

Based on the unity of form and content, weather images are bound to perform a function in the Canadian short story other than that of the traditional introductory mood-setting. Apart from structural enhancement, there may appear weather images with a more local scope yet far from being purely ornamental.

### **4.3 From local to universal**

Weather image quality may indicate some alterations within the examined period of time as much as a time span of fifty-five years in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is unlikely to be homogenous in approaches and attitudes to the short story. Facilitated by the altering cultural milieu(x) writers form part of and responding to the demands of the North-American literary market, a move may be observable towards the preference of universal weather images at the end of the eighties and in the nineties. The two factors that may act as the main driving forces behind this change are the emergence of ethnic writers in Canadian short story writing within the given period and literary globalization.

### **4.4 The existence of a regional code**

On the whole, some confirmation of texts being strongly regionally/environmentally coded with respect to weather images is expected. That is, reflecting the congruence between writers' choice of subjects and the surrounding reality, weather images will function as regional markers, which may be realized in two different ways. First, those stories that are set in a Canadian region will carry the climatic characteristics of the region and will operate with the western symbolism connected to these weather images. Second, those stories that are set outside Canada might operate with the Canadian regional symbolism emphatic in the writer's region whereas ethnic writers may prefer to use the weather images prevalent in their country of origin.

### **4.5 Women writers' use of weather images**

Women writers may use weather images differently from their male contemporaries. As women are more apt to focus on the emotional-psychological aspects of any theme, this, while also implying a qualitative difference in image use, could pre-destine them to employ images of weather with an increased frequency.

### **4.6 The weather-emotion function**

The Canadian short story of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century displays traces of Romanticism, which may also surface in certain weather depiction-related traits, such as the valorization of



personal experience with the inner recesses of personality in focus (Ousby 795), the expression of intensity, landscape as mindscape, or the mirror effect, all forming part of the weather-emotion function.

#### **4.7 Weather image quality**

Apart from providing practical evidence to support or refute the above hypotheses, further investigations will be carried out into the nature of weather images in the Canadian short story of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, touching upon matters such as the degree of weather image abstraction, polarity, metaphoric references to weather, or conventional and unconventional weather symbols. Based on these, an attempt will be made to establish how much originality the Canadian literary idiom can boast.

### **5. Research results**

#### **5.1 Regional distribution**

It has been found that there is a correlation between the writers' region and the setting of the listed stories: the respective numbers roughly correspond in three regions. Reflecting some discrepancy between the writer's region and that of the setting depicted by him or her, six Ontario and British Columbian writers chose to write about a region different from their own whereas four writers abiding elsewhere in Canada chose the Prairies as a setting for their stories. Nine Canadian writers favoured an abroad location, mostly in stories written in the era of multiculturalism. It never happens, however, that we do not know where we are. The region is always identifiable. Regarding **regional distribution** by story setting, the region with the highest weather image content is the Prairies. Ontario and foreign setting figure neck and neck, with the Maritimes as a distant third. To override unequal regional distribution, relative frequency has been introduced in our calculations modifying the order slightly, the Prairies remaining in the lead, foreign setting coming second and Ontario third. Data regarding the Maritimes and Quebec are rather unreliable for the small number of stories conceived in or depicting this region.

#### **5.2 Rural versus urban**

Second in our quantitative examinations, the **rural versus urban** distribution data will be presented. Out of the 47 stories in the collection, 22 belong to the rural only category, 14 to the urban only and 11 to the mixed category. Rural only stories seem to dominate but the last decade of the century, when rural and urban settings are neck and neck reinforcing Fiamengo's assertion

that “the city has become an increasingly important focus for late 20<sup>th</sup> century writers” (Kröller 260). As for the number of weather images in the respective settings, the average rural-urban ratio is approximately four to one while the rural-rural/urban ratio is three to one.

### 5.3 Temporal distribution

As far as **temporal distribution** is concerned, the period containing the highest number of weather images are the eighties, followed by the nineties, the seventies ranking third. However, as it was pointed out earlier, the uneven temporal distribution of the stories makes it necessary to operate with relative frequency in our calculations. This, for the small number of stories, renders data representing the first two decades unreliable. Moreover, it places the seventies in the leading position, with the nineties and eighties ranking second and third, respectively.

### 5.4 Image distribution within the sample

Next, let us consider the **distribution of the various weather images over the sample**. Two different ways of measuring this are the establishment of relative frequency for each kind of image within the sample, and the calculation of story percentage in which the given image surfaces. Figure 1 reveals that snow and sun are the most frequent weather images in the sample, making up approximately 14 percent of the weather image total. Wind and rain follow nearing 9 percent, whereas cold and heat finish third, with about 7 percent. All the other images have a considerably lower occurrence in the sample.

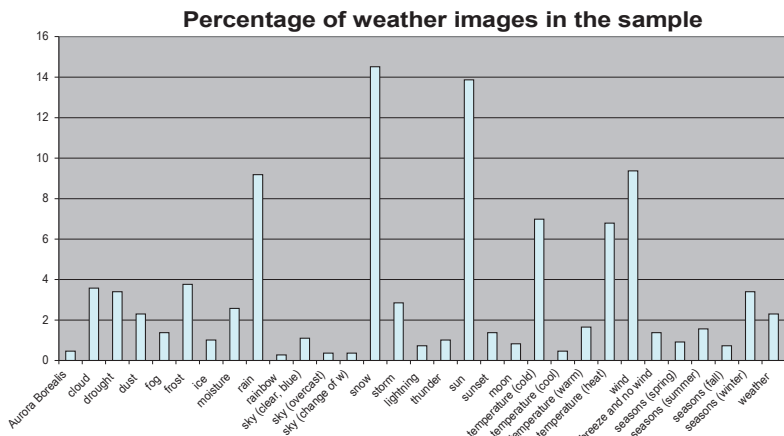


Fig. 1

The bar chart on display to go with figure 2 shows the percentage of the stories in which the various images can be found in the sample. It is the image of the sun that tops the list, making a presence in 70 percent of the total number of stories. Cold, wind and rain are the runner-ups, appearing in 53 to 57 percent of the stories. Heat, snow and frost can also boast values above 40 percent.

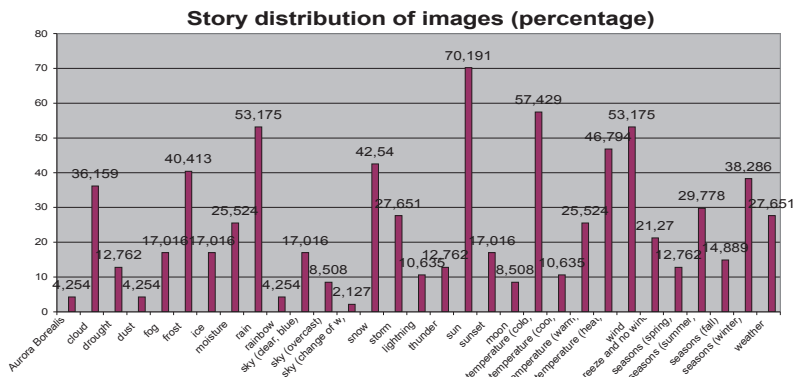


Fig. 2

The decade by decade distribution charts reveal some important changes in the order of image preference. A phenomenon, which may be termed *Canadian literary warming*, is observable concerning the occurrence of weather images during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Canadian short stories: from the traditionally Canadian images of snow and cold the emphasis seems to shift to the more universal rain and sun, which is supported by actual meteorological data. This change in the climatic focus may also be reinforced by the process of literary globalization (i.e. the universal preferred over the local) and multicultural colour picking up on it.

## 5.5 Degree of abstraction

Regarding the degree of abstraction of weather images in the sample, our observations moved along the metonymic and metaphoric axes of directness and overtness. As for the former, the findings reveal that direct weather images dominate making up 77 percent of the sample as opposed to 23 percent for indirect images. Similarly, overt images outnumber covert ones, in a ratio of approximately three to one: 73 percent of weather images fall into the overt and only 27

percent to the covert category. These results seem to support the premise that Canadian writing is characterized by much concreteness.

## **5.6 Image role**

Image role, as the detailed analysis will demonstrate, is largely dependent on the specific image, therefore the number of general weather roles is rather limited. In fact, two such roles can be mentioned, which were both predicted in the theoretical introduction. The more common role of the two is the depiction of emotions: many of the weather images in the sample have the function of mirroring feelings – a much exploited link in Romanticism: “The literature of sensibility and romanticism often assumes a sympathetic connection between nature and subjective feelings, so that all weather may be symbolic” (Ferber 236). This seems to indicate that people feel under the weather also in the literary sense: weather images very often link up with emotions in the stories of the sample. The second characteristic role of weather images is that of structural enhancement: they may provide the central metaphor, form a frame or a micro-story to go with the macro-story, build up an allegory or the climax of the story.

Snow and sun possess the highest number of different image roles, fifteen each. However, in the case of the latter image, all these prove to be conventional, which may be written down to the rich tradition of sun-related symbols. Ranking second, frost and wind figure in eleven different roles in the sample, whereas, at the third place, cloud can boast ten. As a conclusion concerning the leading group of weather images with regard to the number of different roles fulfilled by them in the sample it can be stated that these images fall into two groups fighting a battle: that of Canadian winter-related images and that of universal images with a noted literary history and abundance of conventional roles.

Two Canada-specific images of weather, snow and frost display the highest number of original roles, which finding is not surprising in the sense that what is present in abundance is likely to capture writers’ imagination, and, consequently, to produce a novel role for the phenomenon to perform in their stories, however slowly this may develop. Storm and extremes of temperature follow in the ranking for originality, images that both represent ordinary Canadian meteorological events and display a rich literary tradition.

## **5.7 Central versus marginal**

Considering the stories in the sample, 26 (55%) of them have at least one weather image that plays a central role within the given story, which finding again reinforces the importance of

weather as far as the Canadian literary idiom is concerned. What is more, these images often work in tandem or in a small group in order to produce the effects that make them central in the story. One quick look at such central image groupings reveals that their constituents act towards the same end in the story as they are often supplementary in producing a certain effect on the protagonist(s). The primary weather image with the highest central role percentage by story is snow (50%), followed by storm (38%) rain (28%) and sun (24%). From among secondary weather images, drought, dust, (lack of) moisture and the sky as an indicator of change perform a central role exclusively whereas, among the seasons, winter is the only one to play such a part. In the stories where weather has a central role, the most typical roles are the reflection of emotions and states of mind as well as structure enhancement whereas in stories with a marginal weather image the most typical roles are intensification, accentuation of feelings, illustrating human character or atmosphere or mere circumstance. The latter case is rather rare, there appeared only one story in the collection where the weather is nothing but circumstance.

## **5.8 Polarity**

As for the polarity of images, Atwood's literary pessimism as outlined in *Survival* (39) seems to be justified. It must be added though, that not every image is negative to the same extent. Also, it has to be taken into consideration that some images are predestined to be negative by their physiology, psychological implications or symbolical associations. What is curious and thought-provoking, is that images with the potential of positive meanings attached to them will also have their negative meanings exploited rather than the positive ones. To provide some examples, rain in the function of a curer or fertilizer could be of positive polarity but even when the image is used in these senses, the longed-for cure is delayed and fertilization turns out to be a curse rather than a divine blessing. Again, snow potentially symbolizing peacefulness and purity is not predestined to be of negative polarity. Yet, its negative roles seem to dominate the sample -- which is understandable taken into consideration that, for the average Canadian, snow means more of an impediment than taking delight in winter's beauty, which may echo in writers' judgement of the image. The only image group where positive roles dominate over negative ones is temperature (middle of the scale), that is, cool and warmth.

## **5.9 Victim theory**

As the previous point may also suggest, weather images mostly appear to act as victimisers forming an obstacle or an impediment to humans in the stories of the sample. In fact, they can be classified into two large groups: that of pure victimisers and that of victims and victimizers. It must be mentioned that even the second group is dominated by victimizer roles in the case of

each weather image listed. Extremes of temperature (cold and heat), fog, frost and ice, winter, dust and drought, temperature (middle of the scale), (lack of) moisture, and autumn belong to the first group, enumerated in descending order of victimizer frequency. Snow, clouds, rain, wind, storm and sun form the second group, snow possessing the highest number of victim roles whereas wind takes the lead in victimizing within this group. A weather image can be victimized in various ways: the snow of Montreal can be despised by immigrants, a snowdrift may be vomited onto, air and rain could fall victim to environmental pollution, a gust of wind might be chased by another, and a storm can consume itself as a manifestation of self-victimization.

## **5.10 The comparison of the hypothesis with the research results**

### **5.10.1 Frequency of weather images**

The examined indicators show that weather is still an influential factor in the Canadian short stories of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Producing a sample of 1083 over forty-seven stories, weather images surface in a variety of functions, playing a central role in over half of the examined stories, which proves that they form an organic part of the Canadian collective consciousness.

### **5.10.2 More than just ornamentation**

The examination of image roles (3.3.2.2. and 3.4.1-3.4.12 in the dissertation) convincingly proves the premise that, more than purely ornamental, weather images fulfil a cornucopia of functions in the stories of the sample. What is more, results reveal that 55% of these stories have at least one weather image that plays a central role in them. Central weather images realize most typically as an emotive exponent or as structural enhancement, the latter category including allegory, climax, frame, micro-story to illustrate the macro-story, or central metaphor. Marginal weather roles often manifest in intensification, accentuation of feelings, and the illustration of atmosphere or human character. Weather acting as mere circumstance is rare.

### **5.10.3 From local to universal**

Upon the analysis of the image input, a pronounced move is perceivable towards a more universal literary weather idiom in the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The potential sources that may fuel this process could be literary globalization and multiculturalism, and/or the change of the actual geographical climate.

#### 5.10.4 The existence of a regional code

Taking the detailed analysis of the third chapter into consideration, it can be confirmed that, regarding weather, the examined short story texts appear to be regionally/environmentally coded in the Barthesian terminology, that is, the actual climatological characteristics of the depicted region reflect in the stories containing them, Figure 3 displays a list of the eleven images and image group categories that are represented with a sample of 30 or more within the database. The second column of the chart reveals that nine out of these show a correlation between the actual meteorological data and the weather images prevalent in stories depicting the given Canadian regions. The two images that represent a more subtle case with two simultaneous processes clashing that make the correlation of the literary and the actual climate difficult to prove are clouds and rain. That the two behave similarly should present no surprise taking the previous remark into consideration, which also enables us to limit the discussion to rain. As the section on rain image role testifies, the image is mentioned in some stories conceived or depicting arid areas as wishful thinking triggered by persistent drought. In this reading, areas that are less precipitation prone will inspire a high number of rain images. At the same time, areas with high precipitation values may also take advantage of the image in the regional literary imagination. Similarly, high precipitation values in a given region may induce a writer to turn away from the actual climate and choose a sunnier setting. As the mentioned tendencies act contrary to each other, the resulting set of data will not reflect a homogenous pattern.

In the majority of cases, however, climatic regions produce the weather images (and the related symbolism) characteristic of them. *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories* project demonstrates that what gets incorporated in the story weather-wise is dependent on the regional climate. At a larger scale, this also implies that texts cannot exist independently of the circumstances in which they are conceived.

Upon examining the temporal distribution of weather images, one must state that the results seem less reliable: it occurs only in four cases out of eleven that the correlation is close, and in one further case (winter) it partially holds. In six cases, the available meteorological/ literary data prove to be insufficient and/or no single consistent pattern is observable.

<i>weather image</i>	<i>regional</i>	<i>Temporal</i>	<i>remark</i>
<b>Primary images with more than 30 instances per image/ image group<sup>1</sup></b>			
cloud	wishful thinking + actual weather conditions combine	wishful thinking + actual weather conditions combine	strong correlation with data concerning rain
frost and ice	yes	Yes	correlation with snow rather than with temperature
rain	wishful thinking + actual weather conditions combine	wishful thinking + actual weather conditions combine	Quebec and the Maritimes do not have sufficient data
snow	yes	Yes	
storm, lightning, thunder	yes	data do not reveal any consistent temporal trends	
sun	yes	meteorological data are insufficient	temporal data available only from 1961 on
temperature (cold)	yes, but correlation with snow rather than with actual temperature in the region	No. Seventies at the bottom- in reality at the top. Wishful thinking does not make any sense here. Top of the scale would fit but data are scarce.	
temperature (heat)	yes	Yes	
wind	yes	meteorological data are insufficient	
<b>Secondary image categories with more than 30 instances</b>			
dust and drought	yes	Yes	They also supplement rain showing that the most drought prone areas have a high number of rain and cloud images.
<b>Seasons with more than 30 images</b>			
winter	yes	only in some aspects	

Fig. 3

As to why the temporal axis reveals less correlation between stories conceived in/ depicting a given region and the corresponding meteorological data, the following explanations can be furnished, apart from the occasional insufficiency of meteorological and/or literary input. Firstly, a certain lapse of time may pass between the composition and the publication of any given story but often it is only the latter records mention. As this lapse of time never seems to be constant (e.g. a story may sit and wait a decade in an author's desk to appear in the next story collection of his, whereas in other cases it gets straight into print), it is next to impossible to infer the actual weather conditions at the time the given story was composed. Another factor why the temporal distribution may show a distorted picture is that even the composition of a given story may be triggered by a memory of events happening much earlier in the writer's life, authors may

<sup>1</sup> Images that are discussed within one point are referred to as image groups.



elaborate a subject decades after the actual experience inducing it has taken place. For example, childhood memories often serve as a lifelong source of materials for a writer to work on.

Yet, in certain cases, the temporal distribution of weather images does correlate with the actual climatological trends. As an example, the abundant snowfall of the seventies reflects in the temporal distribution results both for snow and winter. It was surely not a single winter with memorable amounts of snow though, that inspired writers to deal with the image – if a weather phenomenon occurs tendentially over a certain period of time, it will engage the collective consciousness. Snow in the seventies is known to have caused repeated problems raising concern in the inhabitants therefore it is no wonder that images of snow appear in contemporary stories. In fact, regions themselves can be conceived as a temporal accumulation of experience over a certain area (see Adamson), and the regional distribution results demonstrate that over a long enough time interval of repeated experience correlation between the actual and the literary climate is more likely to occur: repeated patterns are bound to stick in people's imagination when it comes to depicting a region. Moreover, climate itself also works along a similar mechanism.

#### **5.10.5 Women writers' use of weather images**

*The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories* project contains a roughly equal story input composed by men (24 stories) and women (23 stories) writers. The quantitative markers reveal that the weather images employed by men total 634 in the sample, in comparison to which women have used a modest 449, which may suggest that the application of weather images attracts men more. In the case of each weather image group, it has been considered whether there exists a discrepancy in the number of stories written by men or women.

A quick glimpse at the findings reveals that the stereotypically Canadian frost, snow and winter are all preferred by women whereas men favour more universal images, such as sun, wind or rain. Moreover, nearly twice as many image groups dominate in women's stories as in those written by men, which, put together with the respective number of images, implies that men's image use is more centralised. As for quantitative markers, the two axes introduced to measure abstraction reveal the women writers' **overt** ratio is higher by 8% whereas men seem to take more advantage of **indirect** images by 4%, which implies a higher metonymic index for them.

Concerning image role, as the theoretical suppositions also seem to imply, women apply the weather role of emotive exponent more frequently than men. At the same time, the role of

structural enhancement seems more common with men. The number of original weather roles is slightly higher for women in the sample.

Weather images of negative polarity dominate for both sexes in the sample, however, they are more emphatically present in women's oeuvre. Victim theory favours the victimiser role for images of weather, the application of which is more frequent with women. These all imply that Atwood's literary pessimism seems to affect women more.

#### **5.10.6 Romantic traces: the weather-emotion function**

The Romantic connection between the emotive sphere and weather images was mentioned in the introduction to *The New Oxford Book of Canadian Short Stories in English* project. The rich palette of images that enter into the weather-emotion relationship in the sample can express a feeling or presentiment, just as it may possess the added value of intensity. Clouds herald storm or rain and link up with grief, sorrow and trouble. Resulting from the gathering clouds, rain is associated with pain, sadness, melancholy and calamity while snow illustrates lovelessness and menace. Temperature indices of heart and mind, cold signals disaffection, lovelessness, indifference and dislike while heat burns off fog, triggers human discomfort or suffering, and draws on conflict, menace, anxiety, aggression and passion. A typically climactic agent, storm combines violence and intensity. Frost reflects fear and embarrassment next to functioning as a portent (and a Romantic means) of self-destruction. Blur and mist are the embodiment of tears whereas the lack of moisture, drought illustrates emotional tension and spiritual sterility. The sun in its emotive role is conducive to the expression of cruelty, anger, hostility, conflict, confidence and dignity whereas the sky, moon and stars embody portents of change and misfortune. Boreas brings lovelessness and alienation, Zephyrus affection, while the two winds of Sinclair Ross's "The Lamp at Noon" externalize the battle of anger and anxiety. In each case, an element of landscape, the weather of the story is illustrative of its protagonists' state of mind for this cornucopia of weather-emotion correspondences. In all the above examples, the landscape functions as mindscape (or, rather, heartscape) through the externalization of an emotive aspect of the protagonist's inner world. This involves a one way projection, usually mapping the landscape (weather) onto the protagonists' feelings, or, more sporadically, mapping the protagonists' feelings onto the landscape (weather).

However, the weather-emotion function may work both ways simultaneously: a romantic remnant building on the connection of emotion and weather is the mirror effect: the simultaneous projection of weather onto human emotion and vice versa, which is characteristic of two stories

in the sample: Guy Vanderhaeghe's "Dancing Bear" and Sinclair Ross's "The Lamp at Noon." The two images partaking in such a relationship therein are the sun and the wind. Another special realization of the weather-emotion function is when a weather image generates the instant and synchronic complexity of the beautiful and the sublime in the protagonist(s). Finally, the sample can also boast a few stories the plot of which is reminiscent of Romantic works in part, where the weather-emotion function plays a crucial role. For instance, Hugh Garner's "One Two Three Little Indians" has a climactic storm shaped after Goethe's *Erkönig* whereas Timothy Findley's "The Duel in Cluny Park" offers a scene of winter duel similar to that of Pushkin's *Onegin*.

Considering the stories in the sample, 34 out of the total 47 possess at least one of the above traits, therefore the emotion-weather function plays an important role in the Canadian short story of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### 5.10.7 Weather idiom quality

Much information has been displayed on conventional and non-conventional weather image use in the sample, upon the assessment of which it can be stated that the weather symbols used by the Canadian writers in the collection figure mostly as conventional converging to Western World symbolism. It is understandable as non-conventional symbolism takes time to develop and it also seems presuppose a close encounter with and a regular hands-on experience of the given phenomenon, which perhaps also justifies why snow-related images (snow, ice and frost, cold and winter) can boast the highest number of original roles in the sample.

### 5.11 What the supplementation of the project revealed/ reinforced

Pryke and Soderlund state that "[g]lobal cultural flows include the movement of ideas [and] images" (264) -- a hint that literary globalization is bound to affect weather image use. The related results may include the augmentation of universal and the simultaneous decline of more local (i.e. winter-related) weather images (figure 4) and image roles, the preference of universal images in a central role, and the illustration of universal themes through weather such as human relationships.

	snow (percentage of weather	sun (percentage of weather	total weather image	winter- related weather	average weather image
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	images)	images)	number	image number	number
<b>Mainstream (1945-1979) 'classic'</b>	22%	7%	829	420	41.4
<b>Mainstream (1980-2000) 'contemporary'</b>	7%	16%	503	128	25.1
<b>Ethnic (1980-2000)</b>	6%	13%	343	99	17.1
<b>Total</b>	14%	11%	1675	647	28

Fig.4

Ethnic stories can boast the lowest total and average image number when compared to both the contemporary and the classic mainstream story sets. Moreover, the number of winter-related images (snow, frost, ice, cold) for the selection of ethnic stories also lags behind the respective values for the two control groups. Both the contemporary mainstream and ethnic stories of the supplementary database reveal a considerably lower central role content while concurrently testifying of the domination of universal images, such as rain, the sun or storm. At the same time, the existing difference in central role content between the two contemporary story groups -- a respective 55% and 25% -- is not to be overlooked, either.

Third, based on the combined database of 107 stories, and taking potential indicators of global warming for Canada into account, one may arrive at the conclusion that there exists a correlation between the actual climatological changes and the alteration in Canadian short story writers' preference of weather images.

Realistically, and in accordance with points 4.1 and 4.2 of the dissertation, *literary climate change* best be viewed as a complex, multifaceted process feeding from various simultaneous sources such as literary globalization, multiculturalism, and, perhaps, even global warming.

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## 6. Publications and conferences related to the topic of the dissertation

### 1. Publications:

2006, January      "Time and Place Weathered – Temporally and Regionally Determined Interpretations of The Weather Idiom"  
in "*Place and Memory in Canada – Global Perspectives*"

Krakow: Polska Akademia Umiejetnosci, 2006. pp. 343-351.

2005. August "Time and Place Weathered – Temporally and Regionally Determined Interpretations of The Weather Idiom"

<http://www3.uj.edu.pl/ISR/kanada/aktualnosci.php>

## **2. Conferences:**

2006, October

"Canadian Metaphors of Weather We Live by"

*Canada in the European Mind- Europe in the Canadian Mind--*

4<sup>th</sup> International Congress and Conference of CEACS, Debrecen, Hungary

2005. August

"But a Few Acres of Snow? -- Weather Images in Modern Canadian Short Prose" --

2. IASA Congress and Conference, Ottawa, Canada

2004. May

"Temporally and Regionally Determined Interpretations of The Weather Idiom"

*Place and Memory*" – 3<sup>rd</sup> International Congress and Conference of CEACS, Krakow, Poland

2002. October

"The Significance of Weather Images in Modern Canadian Short Story Writing"

*Canada in the European Mind-* International Conference, Debrecen, Hungary

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